



PRESS RELEASE

House Armed Services Committee

Floyd D. Spence, Chairman

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ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE CALLS FOR CLEAR ACCOUNTABILITY ON NUCLEAR WEAPONS SECURITY

Today, the House Armed Services Committee reported out of committee a resolution (H.Res. 534) that expresses the sense of the House of Representatives concerning the security failures at the Department of Energy. Upon conclusion of the mark up, committee Chairman Floyd Spence issued the following statement:

"The House Armed Services Committee has been deeply involved in investigating and legislating fixes to address the fundamental breakdown in national security procedures within the DOE nuclear weapons complex. Notwithstanding repeated assurances by Secretary Richardson to the contrary, the recent security failures have once again confirmed that the DOE national laboratory complex and Los Alamos in particular suffer from serious and unacceptable deficiencies in how the nation's most sensitive nuclear secrets are protected.

"This resolution calls for the individuals charged with responsibility for policy and management of security matters at the Department of Energy, the NNSA and Los Alamos to be held accountable for this deplorable performance. H.Res. 534 also calls upon the newly installed Administrator for Nuclear Security, General John Gordon, to take immediate and aggressive action to improve all policies and procedures to safeguard nuclear weapons material and information within the NNSA. Only continued vigilance and aggressive action of this type can address the deep-rooted and bureaucratic problems that led to this fundamental breakdown in security procedures."

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The committee also considered four bills concerning matters related to the management of the nuclear security programs of the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA). The committee's action on these bills is consistent with continued efforts to strengthen the NNSA and enhance and tighten the overall security of the nuclear weapons complex.

The NNSA was established in the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2000 (Public Law 106-65). NNSA is a semi-autonomous agency within DOE charged with responsibility for the management of the Nation's nuclear security programs. The Administrator reports directly to the Secretary of Energy. The creation of the NNSA represents Congress' most significant legislative action taken in response to criticism of DOE for lax security at its weapons laboratories that allowed the People's Republic of China to steal some of the countries most sensitive nuclear weapons secrets. These reforms marked the first major DOE reorganization since the department was established two decades ago.